

United States Senate

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September 4, 1981

Dear Ted:

As you know, this Congress shares a consensus that strong U.S. military forces, especially strategic forces, can and should contribute to world stability. An important consideration in making our force posture a stabilizing one -- both by deterring the Soviets from initiating a nuclear war and by making effective, controlled use of U.S. retaliatory forces if deterrence should fail -- is that strategic Command, Control, Communications, and Intelligence (C³I) systems should be sufficiently capable and immune to disruption.

The Military Construction Subcommittee of the Senate Appropriations Committee is concerned with measures which the Congress can take to ensure the strength of our strategic forces in the coming years, especially in view of the growth of Soviet strategic forces in the past decade. Redundant, capable C³I systems immune to disruption are an integral part of strategic strength. Weapons themselves are less likely to deter attack or to retaliate effectively if the President cannot count on receiving timely and accurate information and reliably communicating his orders to the forces.

Therefore, I would appreciate your assistance to enable the Office of Technology Assessment to prepare a technical assessment of the C³I systems which presently support our central strategic forces. These systems include warning sensors, command posts, and the communications links which connect the President to sensors and forces. Among the questions which the study should address are: 1) Would warning sensors provide reliable information to the President concerning the size and nature of a Soviet attack within a short time of the initiation of the attack?; 2) Would communications connectivity exist for the President to assess the status of U.S. forces and give necessary commands in a timely manner?; 3) How would the answers to these questions depend on the nature of the attack,

September 4, 1981

e.g., whether attack occurred in a time of crisis
or "out of the blue"?

The study should identify needs and opportunities for improvement in the present C³I system, with special emphasis on additions to the system which could usefully be made in the near term with available technology. The study should also identify promising avenues of research for future improvements. This information should be made available to Congress in time to help prepare the FY 83 appropriations.

In order that a meaningful study can be made in a relatively short period of time, the study should focus upon C³I for central strategic forces, excluding European based nuclear forces and U.S. general-purpose forces. The study should focus on a limited period of time, extending from launch of the first enemy missile through the early phase of the war, a duration of between one and several hours. The study should further assume that the President is located in the White House, at Camp David, or at another frequent residence at the time the attack begins.

Key areas of investigation would include early warning and attack assessment systems; airborne and ground-based command centers; and communications links. Key technical issues include the survivability of key facilities, radio blackout, electronic counter-measures (including jamming), electromagnetic pulse (EMP) effects, and the timeliness with which various functions can be accomplished. The study should examine the range and reliability of the information the President is likely to acquire from early warning and attack assessment systems. The time frame in which the President and other National Command Authorities could communicate with and execute U.S. forces would be compared with the requirements of various U.S. response options.

OTA should draw upon appropriate classified data regarding U.S. capabilities and the Soviet threat. Because of the sensitive nature of the subject matter, it would appear that a classified report will be necessary.

Honorable Ted Stevens
September 4, 1981

With your help, I am hopeful that the Technology Assessment Board will act favorably on this request as soon as possible so that the Committee can expect a response by late Spring for use in the 1983 appropriations process.

sincerely,



PAUL LAXALT
U.S. Senator
Chairman, Subcommittee on
Military Construction

PL:bka

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Next 5 Page(s) In Document Denied